New Character in JFK 'Plot'

Oliver Stone script adds Nixon to conspirators list

By Liam Pleven
STAFF WRITER

If you can't resist the second-gunman theory and get caught up in tales of the grassy knoll, director Oliver Stone has got the conspiracy theory movie for you: "Nixon."

According to Time magazine, the man who brought you "JFK" is preparing a new film that says that then-Vice President Richard M. Nixon conceived a plan called Track 2 that created a team of Cubans, CIA agents, right-wing businessmen and mobsters to assasinate Cuban president Fidel Castro.

Then, according to a draft of the film's script obtained by the magazine and described in this week's issue, the same shadowy group shot and killed former President John F. Kennedy on its own initiative.

And then-FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover and E. Howard Hunt, who worked on the Watergate break-in that ultimately forced Nixon to resign the presidency, threatened Nixon with their knowledge of Track 2, according to the script.

All of which makes for a fascinating story about the 37th president, who died last year. But is it true?

"Absolute, total and utter nonsense," said Herbert Parmet, a Distinguished Professor of History at the City University of New York and the author of "Richard Nixon and His America."

"There's never been any hint of any of that. It's not really worth going through point by point," added Parmet. "I guess they waited until he died to come out with this nonsense."

Nobody answered the phone yesterday at the Los Angeles office of Stone, whose film, "JFK," told his version of the Kennedy assasination and was criticized by many historians for taking historical liberties.

But Newsweek, which has its own brief summary of the screenplay in this week's edition, reported that Stone declined to discuss the script, which it said portrayed Nixon as "a misunderstood but largely innocent victim of evil forces," including Hoover, the CIA and his mother.

Both magazines said the script portrays Nixon as haunted by his mother — and Time reports that the ghost of Alger Hiss also taunts Nixon in the script.

The script as described by Time says Nixon himself erased 18½ minutes on one of the famous Watergate tapes because it referred to Track 2. Then-White House Chief of Staff Alexander Haig, according to the purported script, pressured Nixon to resign by implying someone had a pristine copy of the tape.

The magazine also described a scene in which Nixon turns away "an amorous Pat Nixon," by saying, "I'm not Jack Kennedy."

Time also said the script carries a prologue that says "some scenes between protagonists have been imagined," and adds that the story "is based on numerous public sources and on incomplete historical findings."

NEWSDAY, MONDAY, MARCH 13, 1995